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APPENDIX A

Louis Paul Font
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Apartment 1
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

27 February 1970

To: Headquarters, Department of the Army

Through: Commanding General
First United States Army
Attn: AHAAG-PH
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland 20755

Subject: Request for Discharge as a Conscientious
Objector, Pursuant to AR 635-20.

Sir:

1. This is a request for recognition as a conscientious objector and subsequent discharge from the Armed Forces on grounds of conscientious objection, under Army Regulation 635-20. Included herewith is the Required Information of AR 635-20 and several supporting letters. Other letters are forthcoming.

2. I have thought long and hard about my role as a military officer during the Vietnam war. I have been guided by the statement in DOD Pamphlet 1-20, that an officer "has

veracity if, having studied a question to the limit of his ability, he says and believes what he thinks to be true, even though it would be the path of least resistance to deceive others and himself." On grounds of conscience I can in no way participate in the Armed Forces in any capacity during the Vietnam war. My religious beliefs compel me to regard the Vietnam war immoral and unjust and I cannot contribute in any capacity to an immoral war.

3. Further, I sincerely feel that in filing this conscientious objector claim, I am doing my duty to my country. Proposition XIII of the Armed Forces, as stated in *The Armed Forces Officer*, DOD Pamphlet 1-20 seems quite relevant:

Within our school of military thought, higher authority does not consider itself infallible. Either in combat or out, in any situation where a majority of militarily trained Americans become undutiful, that is sufficient reason for higher authority to resurvey its own judgments, disciplines, and line of action.

4. In accordance with AR 635-20, paragraph 6a, I hereby request that, pending a final decision on this application, I be retained in my present assignment at my present duty station as an Army student in the Army Civil Schools Program at Harvard University.

5. I have sought and obtained legal advice by counsel provided at my request by the American Civil Liberties Union. My attorneys are:

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Mr. Marvin Karparkin,
Mrs. Rhoda H. Karparkin, and
Mr. Michael Pollet
c/o Karparkin, Ohrenstein & Karparkin
1345 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N. Y.

Mr. Melvin Wulf
c/o American Civil Liberties Union
156 Fifth Avenue
New York, N. Y.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ LOUIS PAUL FONT
Louis Paul Font
1st Lt., MI

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(2) Religious training and belief

(a) A description of the nature of the belief which is the basis of my claim.

The value I place on human life, the value I place on individual integrity and honor, and the respect I feel for God, my Creator, compels me to submit this claim of conscientious objection to the Vietnam war. I am not a total pacifist, but after considerable meditation and study, there exists no doubt in my mind that the Vietnam war is immoral and unjust. To me, in Vietnam the United States government is destroying another country—an underdeveloped country—and in the process is destroying itself. I find this morally repugnant. Each ton of explosives takes its toll in the brutalization of the American soldier in the field as well as in lives of the Vietnamese people. Accounts of the death and hardship and the suffering of the Vietnamese people are legion; one need only read General William C. Westmoreland's June 1968 Report on the War in Vietnam to grasp the flavor of a war characterized by both massive destructive technology and the inability to distinguish combatants from noncombatants. For me to contribute to wanton destruction of life would do violence to my innermost convictions. This I cannot and will not do.

Despite the fact that as an Army student at Harvard, I am thousands of miles from the battlefield, the Vietnam war is far more than a philosophical exercise for me. Whenever my mind begins to wander, it is jerked to reality by the reminder that I am an officer. An officer is expected not only to contribute his individual talent but also to enlist the cooperation of other officers and enlisted men. I know down deep inside me that I could no more lead a company of men—120 souls—in Vietnam than I can cease to be

Louis Paul Font, human being. I cannot write condolence letters to the mournful mothers and fathers and new widows. I have seen military funerals up close; I have served on the honor guard of some of my close friends who are now interred at the West Point Cemetery. I know it would destroy me to gaze into the tearful eyes of a mother whose son I led in a war I regard as immoral.

To me, the war is destroying the integrity of the United States and of some of its best men. I have spoken with Vietnam returnees. Some of what I have been told has jarred my conscience. There is no doubt in my mind that this war is dehumanizing some of America's finest men, some of America's finest military officers. At West Point I once spoke with a Major, not a member of the academic faculty. I asked him, "How does it feel to kill?" He replied, "I feel the same elation as when I kill deer." I could not believe his words. I paused for a moment, collected my thoughts, and then asked, "Do civilians die in Vietnam, and if so, to what extent?" He then said, and these are the exact words he used, for they are etched in my memory: "Cadet Font, it is like this. You are walking down a street after a battle and you see a six-year-old girl lying there. You roll her over (and with this he made a rolling motion with his foot) and you say 'How about that, the Viet Cong are now using six-year-old girls to do their dirty-work.'" I stood listening, dumbfounded. I had asked the questions because they were on my mind; his replies caused me to investigate further questions pertaining to the Vietnam war and conscience and religious belief. This claim, written after considerable personal anguish, is the result of my inquiry.

I hasten to add that I in no way mean to disparage the Armed Forces by relating this incident. The abhorrent

incident concerning the village of Song My and its inhabitants has already painted a dark and bloody picture of many officers and enlisted men in the U.S. Army. Also, I should point out that at West Point and elsewhere I have met many officers whom I regard with the highest esteem. Nevertheless, I did war with my conscience to learn, for example, of the photograph mailed in a Christmas card by Colonel George S. Patton III. According to public reports, the color photograph featured Col. Patton standing before a pile of dismembered Vietnamese bodies; the caption on the card read "Colonel and Mrs. George S. Patton III—Peace on Earth." Col. Patton is now a Brigadier General. Countless times I have asked myself: Is this the American ideal or has America somehow gone astray?

The underlying premise of my religious beliefs is that human life is of value, of high value, of sacred value. Life is precious and is to be cherished and respected. Life is a divine spark, a gift of God that knows no color or creed, like love. Snuffing out a divine spark—taking the life of another human being even in the hope of saving others, even in a just war—is, at best, of marginal morality. My religious beliefs compel me to believe that the gross and indiscriminate level of violence applied in Vietnam tips the moral balance strongly on the side of the immoral, of unjustness, and therefore the taking of any life in Vietnam, or contributing to that effort, is impossible for me. To me, the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" at a very minimum points to the inherent sanctity and worth of life. If my Methodist upbringing and belief means anything at all, it certainly means—it *must* mean—that a person's life is of value.

The Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," compels me to view the Vietnam war

from the standpoint of the victim, the Vietnamese peasant and the American soldier. I am convinced that it makes no difference whatsoever to the Vietnamese who looks up into the sky and sees silver napalm canisters tumble down toward him, whether the napalm falls because the United States government loves him or hates him or is liberating him or pacifying him. The point is that the bombs fall and the human being is dead—and with him a trace of mankind and humanity. In the words of John Donne, the English poet, "No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . . any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind . . ."

It is only after long and careful study, meditation, and prayer with my God that I have come to these conclusions. I have had to ask myself some difficult and grueling questions: Given that I regard the Vietnam war as immoral, can I, should I accept assignment to Vietnam, even if to sit behind a desk in Saigon? Could I perform my job with the initiative and high performance expected of a West Point graduate? Does a moral man, whose religious beliefs compel him to find the Vietnam war immoral, remain in the Armed Forces that wages that war? Where do my loyalties lie when there exists a clear conflict between my duty to God and my duty to my country?

Over the last several months I have sought answers to these questions in religious readings and other books, in discussions with my friends, in discussions with theologians, but always, in the sound of silence, the questions return to gnaw at my conscience. When I consider this ordeal, the words of the Greek poet, Aeschylus, seem appropriate:

Even in our sleep, pain
which cannot forget,
falls drop by drop upon the heart until,
in our despair, against our will,
comes wisdom through the
aweful grace of God.

My "wisdom," my irrevocable and undebatable conclusion, my deepest emotions founded on my religious belief, compel me to reject participation in the Vietnam war as immoral . . . I feel this with my whole being. I feel this with the same sort of total awareness that compelled John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, to separate himself from the Anglican Church on grounds of conscience. To be able to live with myself and others, I must file this claim. The following passage from Luke, ch. 6, v. 49, illuminates my position: "But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house on the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." Were I to do nothing, or were I to allow my conscience to be violated, I would no longer be of any value to myself or to the country that I cherish.

In essence, then, I have concluded that I am part of an immoral force, an Army engaged immorally in war. In clear conscience I cannot participate in the Vietnam war in any form; I cannot squeeze the trigger that would unjustly take another human life, I cannot command others to do so. I cannot participate in any way in a military organization where such things are being done. I therefore respectfully request discharge from the Armed Forces. I place my trust in my God and in the United States of America.

2(b) The sources of my religious belief

Most of all, my religious training and belief comes from a re-evaluation and application of those religious principles that I have been taught all of my life. During the past year I have spent many hours trying to discern the meaning, in light of the Vietnam war, of those religious principles I learned in a Christian home, in an active church life, in the Boy Scouts of America, at the United States Military Academy, and in the numerous books I have read.

The more I have learned about the Vietnam war, the greater my moral doubts have become and the more I have sought answers in the religious principles I have long been taught.

It was during my last semester at West Point that I first detected any conflict between the dictates of my conscience and the dictates of my country. At West Point religion is part of daily life. The Protestant Chapel on the Academy grounds stands high above any other structure or any other terrain. Religious training is considered so important in the development of the character of the cadet that attendance at religious services is compulsory. At West Point, however, it is generally assumed that duty to God and to Country are one and the same. Matters of conscience in this regard are discussed little, if at all, and the intense and rigid military atmosphere made it difficult for me to investigate seriously religious principles regarding conscientious objection. No one discussed, for example, the moral dilemma of the Southern officer who at the outbreak of the Civil War found himself in the Northern Army, or of the Southern Cadet, during the same period, at West Point.

As public outcry on the war intensified, my thoughts turned to the Vietnam war. I was as much concerned with matters of foreign policy, however, as of conscience. This was only normal for a cadet interested in government and soon to attend graduate school in government. Indeed, when I first arrived in Cambridge my priority was still foreign policy. I took a seminar course entitled "National Security Policy" with Dr. Henry Kissinger, now Special Assistant to President Richard Nixon. One main topic in this course was Vietnam. As it developed, the more I learned about the war, the more I began to think, and the more I turned to religion.

Indeed, to me, the important thing about Cambridge, Mass. is that I have had the time to think. This is the element that for me, was missing at West Point. In Cambridge, countless hours of my free time were spent walking quietly along the Charles River, thinking and meditating and praying. In March 1969 I began attending Quaker meetings at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge.

Then in June 1969 there occurred a personal incident which compelled me to feel that I was either a conscientious objector or well on my way to being one. It was an incident that brought out my sensitivities in all their rashness. I was seated in a cafeteria on campus with three other members of the Kennedy School of Government, each a Vietnam returnee: one in the State Department, one in Agency of International Development, and the other, an officer in the Armed Forces. They began reminiscing about the Vietnam war. The conversation turned to how each would like to return to Vietnam after the war because Vietnam is such a beautiful country. Then the conversation turned to the impressment of soldiers into the National Liberation Front by Viet Cong. Someone mentioned that

the South Vietnamese Army does exactly the same thing: surround a village, close in, take away the able-bodied men. I understand the necessity for such action even though it bespoke untold tragedy. But then they all laughed; for them, the tragedy was comedy. I felt a sense of uncontrollable and mounting moral outrage mixed with confusion. Here were some of my best friends acting in what, to me, was such a callous and dehumanized manner. I soon could no longer remain silent and I literally blew up. I told them, practically yelling, that I saw nothing whatsoever to laugh about, that the people were suffering unbearably, and that they, too, were victims of the Vietnam war. It was their turn to be shocked. They told me that I simply did not understand the customs of the Vietnamese.

For long afterwards the incident remained etched in my mind. I asked myself: If I go to Vietnam will I return like them? Am I now like them, and if not, why not? It was a week after this incident, in June 1969, that I first sought counsel. Since then, with mounting intensity, my thoughts have been engulfed by the Vietnam war and religious matters. I have turned to the sources of my belief as well as to authors who were previously unknown to me.

Among the sources of my belief that I have re-examined is the West Point Cadet Prayer. I find that this prayer basically embraces those ideals upon which I base this claim, and also exemplifies the principles I gained as an adolescent, from other sources. Since I consider this prayer of primary importance in my life, it is best to quote it in full:

O God, our Father, Thou Searcher of Men's Hearts, help us draw near to Thee in sincerity and truth. May our religion be filled with gladness and may our worship of Thee be natural.

Strengthen and increase our admiration for honest dealing and clean thinking, and suffer not our hatred of hypocrisy and pretence ever to diminish. Encourage us in our endeavor to live above the common level of life. Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half truth when the whole can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy. Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life. Grant us new ties of friendship and new opportunities of service. Kindle our hearts in fellowship with those of a cheerful countenance, and soften our hearts with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer. Help us to maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished and unsullied and to show forth in our lives the ideals of West Point in doing our duty to Thee and to our Country. All of which we ask in the name of the Great Friend and Master of men. Amen.

I accept these words without reservation; to me, the courage to be is the courage to live up to such a code.

I must choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong; I must, in all honesty and sincerity, act on my beliefs if I am to maintain my integrity as a human being, or simply, as a person who can live with himself. I must guard against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life—like life itself. I must soften my heart with sympathy for those who sorrow and suffer. The sorrowing and suffering in Vietnam is so extensive as to be unimaginable.

I ask myself: How many times can a man turn his head and pretend that he just does not see? How many deaths does it take before too many people have died?

I must maintain the honor of the Corps untarnished. For me to participate in any way in the Vietnam war is an unjustified taking of human life, something which would dishonor my country as well as the United States Military Academy.

The religious ideals emphasized in the West Point Cadet Prayer, in essence, are the same ones I learned at home as a child. My parents, devout and active Methodists, did their best to teach and instill in me honesty in daily affairs, respect for the rights and feelings of others, a dedication and regard for integrity, and an intense desire to lead a life of service. I come from a family that is very close, the sort of family that has been through both hard and joyous times together, the sort of family who plays and prays and shares together, and the sort of family whose dream came true when their son attended and graduated from the U.S. Military Academy. I well remember a photograph we have in our family album. It is of my sister and me, at ages six and eight, seated at Trophy Point at the Academy with a cadet seated between us. I often consulted this photograph in the private and quiet fantasies of youth, and I resolved to prepare for the West Point ideals as well as live by them. As it turned out, I became a West Pointer. Coincidentally, my sister became a Captain in the Army Nurse Corps and was stationed for two years at West Point.

My family and I attended church services every Sunday, and, in fact, our life revolved around the church. My father taught Sunday school for years and he also served as presi-

dent of the Methodist Men's Club of our church. While I was in junior high and high school I attended many church dinners and meetings in which my father was the presiding officer. My father is also a lay preacher of the Methodist Church, and as such, gives sermons in various churches in the Kansas Area Conference. I can well remember sitting in the church pew listening to my father speak to the congregation. One sermon he has given, for example, is entitled "Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way." It was only natural, then, for me to feel that for a while I should follow—at West Point during plebe year I must follow—so that later I could and should be a leader. My mother and two sisters, of course, were also active in the church: Sunday School, church suppers, picnics, banquets, Women's Society meetings, church discussion groups.

With all the church activity around me and the normal son's desire to follow in the footsteps of his father, I also participated actively in religious activities. In junior high school and high school I served as president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship and represented my church at district youth meetings. In this way I was able to speak with young people from different congregations and bring new ideas back to my local church. In junior high school I sang in the choir; later I taught Sunday School to my contemporaries and also to those a few years younger than me. This required study in such areas as the life of John Wesley, founder of Methodism, or the meaning of a passage from the Bible. In preparing these lessons I found the volumes of the Interpreter's Bible that we have at home helpful. Also, some Sundays I offered a prayer during the regular service or served as a candlelighter. In effect, then, on any given Sunday most, if not all, of my day was

spent in religious activity: Sunday School, Church service, Methodist Youth Fellowship meeting, church supper. During the summers I would spend ten days in religious activity at a Youth Retreat at Baldwin University at Baldwin, Kansas. These were ten days reserved for prayer and meditation and Christian fellowship with young Protestants from across the state.

Also, though my family is Methodist and we attended the Methodist Church practically every Sunday for as long as I can remember, we also visited churches of other faiths: Presbyterian, Episcopal, Catholic, Unitarian. This was done purposefully by my parents as an educational exercise for their children, and to emphasize to us that other persons may have religious beliefs different from ours but that their beliefs are also worthy of respect. This tendency in my family to at least touch on other religions derives from the fact that my mother was raised as a Catholic and then became Methodist after marrying my father, and also because my father was raised in New York City where as a young man he was exposed to several other religions. It is from these factors that I, in turn, feel a sense of universality in religions: though the core of my belief is Methodism, I feel liberated rather than confined by my belief. Perhaps it is for this reason that the interdenominational Protestant Chapel at West Point appealed to me, and why, after tasting of services at a variety of churches in the Boston and Cambridge area (Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, Old South Church in Boston, Harvard Epworth Methodist Church in Cambridge, St. Paul's Cathedral, and others), I have settled on Memorial Church in Harvard Yard with its interdenominational services.

My career as a Boy Scout is also of religious significance. From ages 12 to 18 I was a very active member of the Boy Scouts of America, an organization whose creed embraces the same concepts of Duty-Honor-Country as does West Point. I should mention that I was especially eager to participate in the Scout movement because my father, an Eagle Scout in his youth, took special interest in my progress. For a year during my Boy Scout career he served as Scoutmaster of my Troop. The Boy Scout Troop I attended was sponsored by my church, Quayle Memorial Methodist Church in Kansas City, Kansas, and the Scout meetings were held each week at the church. I learned and repeated and believed in—as I continue to believe in—the Boy Scout Oath: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and to my country . . . ” The Scout Law, another solid foundation of belief, was instilled in me: “A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful . . . Brave, Clean, and Reverent.” In the area of Scout Reverence I both proved myself and acquired some of my religious training and belief by earning the God and Country Award, an award jointly presented in a church ceremony by the minister of the church and the Scoutmaster of the Troop. The award entailed over two years of service to the church and community and a lengthy written examination on Methodist belief and church history.

There is another main source of my religious belief: my education, or more particularly, the books I have read, both in and out of the classroom. For purposes of illustrating the evolution of my beliefs, I have chosen one book from each of three periods in my life which, at the time, were of serious influence.

In high school I read *Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy. This book still inspires me to combine service with integrity. Upon rereading, I find the following passage, concerned with men who stood firm to their principles, quite relevant: "... each one's need to maintain his own respect for himself was more important to him than his popularity with others—because his desire to win or maintain a reputation for integrity and courage was stronger than his desire to maintain his office—because his conscience, his personal standard of ethics, his integrity or morality, call it what you will—was stronger than the pressures of public disapproval."

The second book which influenced my life, is *The Art of Loving*, by Dr. Erich Fromm, a world-famous psychoanalyst, which I read during my senior year at West Point. Dr. Fromm discusses both theory and practice of brotherly love, self-love and love of God. In effect, Dr. Fromm points to attributes that are essential, I believe, to all persons, including the military officer.

A third book—one that I read at Harvard—that has made an impact on my life is *I and Thou* by Professor Martin Buber. This powerfully written essay, written over 25 years ago by a philosophy professor at Hebrew University, emphasizes the spirituality and humanity of man viewed from the standpoint of the individual, of you and me, of *I and Thou*.

I have, of course, read other books. At the beginning of my senior year at the U.S. Military Academy, as part of my prescribed course work, I read *The Arrogance of Power* by Senator J. William Fulbright. This book influenced my belief. At a minimum, it served to place the Vietnam war in the forefront of my mind. Also, in his

book Senator Fulbright discusses "the higher patriotism," the courage to dissent, to stand for one's convictions, to refuse to substitute consensus for conscience. He writes: "In a democracy dissent is an act of faith. Like medicine, the test of its value is not its taste but its effect, not how it makes people feel at the moment but how it makes them feel and moves them to act in the long run. Criticism may embarrass the country's leaders in the short run but strengthen their hand in the long run . . . "

Outside of classroom activity, I discovered and began reading the works of the French writer, Albert Camus. In his "Letters to a German Friend," for instance, he writes "And I should be able to love my country and still love justice." It is also Camus who, with his typical concern for humanism—the regard for the individual, the noble figure in the flesh—has written, "I loathe none but the executioner." Also relevant in my life, "We got into the habit of living before we got into the habit of thinking."

As a result of a political philosophy course I took at the end of my senior year, I discovered the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian who wrote in the 1930's and 1940's. At the beginning of his *Ethics*, a book that emphasizes that God's commandment is to be found not only in the church but also in family, labor, government, there is a poem entitled "Stations on the Way to Freedom." It reads in part:

Do and dare what is right, not swayed by the whim of the moment. Bravely take hold of the real, not dallying now with what might be. . . . Make up your mind and come out into the tempest of the living. God's command is enough and your faith in him to sustain you.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer lived up to his words. In April 1945, determined to the last to "do and dare what is right," he was hanged by the Nazis.

I have continued, since arriving in Cambridge, to read in the general area of theology. Among these books are some of the writings of Dr. Paul Tillich: *The Dynamics of Faith* and *The Courage To Be*. Dr. Tillich's discussion of faith was important to me because at the time I read it, about a year ago, I was preoccupied with whether there is a God. I was trying to reconcile my own thoughts and training with the divergent views of such men as Bertrand Russell, Albert Camus and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I concluded that all arguments boil down to faith and that I have that faith. Dr. Tillich also wrote in *The Courage To Be* of the spiritual basis—the being—of leading a life of integrity, of choosing the "harder right instead of the easier wrong." As such, *The Courage To Be* is both a call to action and a theoretical dissertation. This sort of book, combined with the opportunity to discuss its contents with my close friends and several theologians I have visited, has enabled me to better grasp my own beliefs and those of other persons.

In summary, then, my religious beliefs are those principles I have been taught all of my life—at home, at church, in the Boy Scouts, at the U.S. Military Academy—as I now apply them in light of extensive study and meditation and in light of the Vietnam war. I am, of course, certain of my religious beliefs and their sources, yet it would not surprise me if some persons who do not know me attribute dishonorable motives to my claim. I can only say that I am 23 years old and have not yet been in a situation, other than the intensive discipline and constant testing of West

Point, which would demonstrate my courage. While I cannot say that I am the bravest member of my class, I believe that at a minimum, I am as brave as the fellow next to me. Were the Vietnam war, to me, a just war, I would be more than willing, and I am sure quite able, to lead men in battle. I do not think that my superiors at West Point made a mistake in their various determinations, made on the basis of continuous testing, supervision and review, that I have the moral character and capacity for bravery which all West Point graduates must have. I think I have the same strengths and capacities now as when I graduated and was commissioned. But, for the reasons I have tried to indicate, my moral position has been so profoundly changed that I must seek discharge from the Army.

2(c) Names and addresses of individuals upon whom I rely most for matters of religious guidance in matters of conviction relating to this claim.

I rely on several persons for religious guidance and other matters related to conscientious objection to the Vietnam war. Among them are the following: Dr. Robert Hamill (Methodist) Dean of Marsh Chapel, Boston University, Boston, Mass.; Reverend Charles P. Price, Memorial Church, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Mr. Elmer Brown (Quaker) Executive-Secretary of the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, Mass.; Rabbi Herman Pollack (Jewish), Religious Counselor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.; Rabbi Ben Zion Gold (Jewish), Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Dr. Paul Deats (Methodist), School of Theology,

Boston University, Boston, Mass.; Dr. Ralph Potter (Presbyterian), Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, Mass.

2(d) The circumstances under which I believe in the use of force.

I feel that my conscientious beliefs are moving toward universal pacifism. However, at the present time and in all honesty, I must state that I am a selective conscientious objector: I object to participation in the Vietnam war in any form.

I believe there are times when an individual or a nation may morally engage in the use of force. As I stated previously, however, I also believe that the taking of another man's life is always of marginal morality, no matter what the cause. In light of the complexity of the subject, I cannot draw the fine lines between the moral and immoral uses of force and violence. But at present my religious beliefs and conscience are confronted by the Vietnam war and there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the Vietnam war is immoral and unjust.

When I apply the Just War theories as laid down by St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and others, to me at a minimum, the Vietnam war is rendered unjust by the vast scale and proportion of destruction deployed, especially in a war characterized by the inability to distinguish combatants from noncombatants. The way my conscience forces me to see it—the way I *feel* it—the U.S. government is destroying another country and culture and in the process is destroying itself and its integrity. As such it is my conviction that the Vietnam war is immoral; for me to participate in any way in an immoral war is the most extreme form of violence to my conscience.

- 2(e) Describe the actions and behavior in your life which most conspicuously demonstrate the consistency and depth of your religious convictions which give rise to this claim.

A consistency between my beliefs and my behavior is found in my increasing preoccupation with the Vietnam war and matters of religion. During my senior year at the Academy I was quite concerned with the Vietnam war. The same can be said, to an intensified degree, of my first year in Cambridge. However, since June 1969, the Vietnam war and matters of conscience and religion have practically engulfed my life. My psychic energy has been expended on these matters, so has my time, so has my physical energy. My relationship with my friends, many of them military officers, have been strained by my beliefs and my willingness to express them, as well as by my inability to concentrate on matters other than the war and conscientious objection. I have purchased and read numerous books on the Vietnam war, on theology and on conscientious objection, and have written of my findings. In section 2(f) of this application I list the papers I have written and their subjects. Suffice to say that it takes time and energy to produce such work. I have read books in an effort to better be able to answer recurring questions that have been gnawing me: Where do my primary loyalties lie? Of what relevance to my religious views are the Just War theories of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine and others? Am I a conscientious objector? Can I serve in the military in any capacity during the Vietnam war? In my quest for meaning I have read or reread such books as Paul Tillich's *The Courage To Be* and *The New Being*, the three volumes of Bertrand Russell's *Autobiography*,

Erich Fromm's *The Same Society* and *Escape from Freedom*, and most of the work of Albert Camus. Also, of course, I have consulted the Bible, most particularly the tranquility I have found in the Psalms.

Aside from attending church services regularly, I have consulted with several theologians in the Boston and Cambridge area in order to better grasp the meaning of Humanism, Methodism, passages from the Bible, and the relationship of these to my religious beliefs—and to my integrity. The names of some of these men are listed in section 2(c) of this application.

Also, and something I consider quite important, during the last several months I have joined organizations which, after extensive study, I have found to be consistent with my Methodist and Humanist belief. In August 1969 I became a member of the American Humanist Association, an organization which was incorporated in 1941 as an "educational membership organization," and whose creed reads in part, "Humanism accepts ethical responsibility for human life, emphasizing human interdependence." I also joined the American Civil Liberties Union, feeling that an Army officer, as it states in DOD Pamphlet 1-20, *The Armed Forces Officer*, should have a "strong belief in human rights" and "respect for the dignity of every other person" and "an abiding interest in all aspects of human welfare." Recently I joined the Methodist Peace Fellowship, a pacifist organization affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The Fellowship of Reconciliation is an interdenominational as well as international peace organization founded in Europe after World War I and recognized by the United States government as a peace organization.

Aside from matters related directly to my activities in Cambridge over the last several months, the consistency in my professed religious beliefs and in my regard for my country is perhaps found in the faith others have placed in my principles and character, and in the extent to which I have put forth my maximum effort. I graduated from West Point as a Distinguished Graduate, standing in the top 5% of my class. In a class of 706 I stood number 31 in General Order of Merit, a ranking which includes military aptitude and physical education as well as academic endeavor. I ranked first in my class in foreign language, second in law, and in the top ten in psychology, history and social sciences. In my senior year I was selected as one of nine cadets to represent West Point in the Rhodes Scholarship competition. In September 1967 I was chosen as one of four cadets to represent the United States and West Point in Santiago, Chile, in ceremonies of "El Dia de La Patria." In August 1966, as a junior, I was one of four cadets representing the Academy in an exchange trip with the Mexican Military Academy in Mexico City; I was cadet-in-charge of the trip. On several occasions I have represented West Point in model United Nations Assemblies with college students from across the nation; for two years I participated in a Latin American roundtable of the Student Conference on United States Affairs held annually at West Point, in which over one hundred schools are represented. In my senior year I was selected to represent the Academy on the Dorothy Gordon Youth Forum television program discussing "Latin American Unity" with other college seniors and the Assistant Secretary of State of Inter-American Affairs. Also, I should mention that in my senior year for three months I served as Adjutant of a Cadet Battalion, responsible for the administra-

tion and personnel requirements of over 400 cadets. I also served as Transportation Chairman of the Student Conference on United States Affairs, being directly responsible for the transportation requirements of over 250 people. There is another fact which deserves mentioning since at West Point it is no small feat. I was one of those who "never walked," that is, never during my cadet career did I go over my allowed number of demerits for any month.

Further, I was endorsed by the Academy and the United States Army to attend graduate school, and I was accepted at Harvard University for two years of study at the John F. Kennedy School of Government leading to the Master in Public Administration degree. I came to Harvard to better prepare myself for a life of service to my God and to my country; in the application for admission I put it this way: "I now ask you for the opportunity to invest my talent at the Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government to enable me better to serve my country. In the words of the late President Kennedy, addressing the West Point graduating class of 1962: 'Our Armed Forces must fulfill a broader role—as a complement to our diplomacy—as an arm of our diplomacy . . . the military problems which we face will also be non-military—diplomatic, political and economic.'"

Perhaps some consistency in my beliefs is also shown by the awards and honors I earned during an earlier period in my life, in the Boy Scouts of America. I should first mention that in the Mid-west the Boy Scouts and the church are closely affiliated, the Troop meetings are often held in the Church, and such was the case with the Troop I attended. After two years of work in the church and a lengthy written examination in Methodist belief and doc-

trine, I earned the God and Country Award, an award which combines the reverence of a Scout with his duty to service. Further, at the age of fourteen I attained the highest rank of the Boy Scouts, the Eagle Award. The Eagle, of course, stands as a symbol of America and citizenship. In 1962 I was chosen to represent 10,000 other boys and as one of six young men in the State of Kansas to make the annual Report to the Governor during Boy Scout Week, presenting the Governor with a statement and having luncheon with him.

Also consistent with my beliefs are my activities during the summer of 1968, the summer after graduation from West Point and before coming to Cambridge. I served as a volunteer counselor at Camp Friendship, a Mennonite-sponsored camp for underprivileged children from the Washington, D.C. area. For two weeks I lived in a log cabin with eight young black boys. I then worked for my Congressman, a Republican from Kansas, again as a volunteer, for a month in his Washington, D.C. office. I balanced this experience with volunteer work in the office of Senator George McGovern, Democrat from South Dakota.

At this point in my life, the only action that I can take which is consistent with my beliefs is the filing of this conscientious objector claim. I devoutly believe that the filing of this application is consistent with the strong devotion and sense of honor imbued in me at the United States Military Academy. If I were a different person, were my convictions not as strong, there would be other courses of action open to me. With my education and as a Military Intelligence officer, were I assigned to Vietnam I could request to sit behind a desk writing reports. Afterwards I could return to West Point and teach for two to four years. Then, if I so desired, I could resign from the

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Armed Forces. But, for me to take such a course of action would be to deceive others and myself. I therefore seek separation by Army Regulation, even if such action causes my family some embarrassment, and even if such action divides me from my military friends, and from my childhood dreams.

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(Letterhead of Saint Paul School of Theology
Methodist, Kansas City, Missouri 64127)

February 24, 1970

Gentlemen:

I have read the statement of Louis Paul Font concerning his religious beliefs, training and conscientious objection to participation in the war in Vietnam. His statement in my judgment demonstrates an understanding of the Methodist Church's position on war and conscientious objection. He also gives every indication of sincerity and gradual growth into his present position with respect to the war.

Font's statement is somewhat typical of the young Methodist who cannot escape his early home and church training even though for a time he had assumed he could undertake a military career. The unusual thing about his statement is that it is not a reaction against his military training but a conviction against participation in the war in Vietnam. This shows a very great sensitivity of conscience about war in the light of the Christian tradition concerning war. Within that tradition are two types of conscientious objectors, those who cannot participate in any war and those who examine each war in the light of Christian teaching. Font takes the latter position of objection to a specific war which has long been a valid Christian position recognized not only by Christian theologians but also by Churches and Church agencies via specific adopted resolutions.

I wrote the above not simply as a Methodist minister, but as one who since 1939 has been involved in counselling

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with hundreds of conscientious objectors and in formulating policy statements of both church and government with respect to conscientious objection.

Sincerely,

/s/ JOHN M. SWOMLEY, JR.
John M. Swomley, Jr.
Prof. Christian Ethics

JMS:jmh

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(Letterhead of Headquarters, United States European
Command, APO New York 09128)

24 March 1970

Commanding General
First United States Army
Fort George G. Meade
Maryland 20755

1. I have been asked to comment upon the sincerity and character of First Lieutenant Louis P. Font, USA, pursuant to his application for discharge as a conscientious objector (Inol 1). I have read a copy of Lt. Font's petition of 27 February 1970 submitted in accordance with AR 635-20.
2. I knew Lt. Font during my tour of duty as an instructor, Department of Social Sciences, U.S. Military Academy, from 1964 to 1968. Font was my student, a member of the debate team I coached, and a friend and counselee during this period.
3. Based upon my contacts with Font and observation of his performance at West Point, I will attest that he was a very serious, pensive, conscientious young man completely devoted to the ideals of "Duty, Honor, Country" and the military service. He was an ideal and outstanding young man in every aspect of Cadet endeavor—academic, athletic, leadership and moral integrity. I had no doubts concerning the personal sincerity of his convictions, the loftiness of his ideals, the intellectual prowess by which he arrived at his conclusions, and the moral rectitude of

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his character. He was without guile or self-seeking, and wholly dedicated to the values of West Point. I strongly endorsed his application for a Rhodes Scholarship, being convinced that he fully met the high intellectual, leadership, moral, humanistic and public service qualifications demanded. I know of no incident, circumstance or trait which would cause me to change my high opinion of Font's strength of character, moral courage and sincerity.

4. However, at no time during our acquaintance can I remember that we ever discussed his religious beliefs or moral feelings toward the war in Viet Nam. Furthermore, I have not seen nor corresponded with Font since his graduation from USMA in June 1968. Hence, I cannot comment on the substantive matter of his application for discharge as a conscientious objector based on his religious beliefs, nor would I presume to advise on the disposition of this difficult matter except to hope that it will be resolved wisely in the best interests of the Army.

/s/ JAMES R. MURPHY
JAMES R. MURPHY
Major, USAF
439-44-6649

AVDCCS

14 April 1970

Commanding General
First United States Army
Fort George G. Meade, Maryland 20755

1. I write on behalf of First Lieutenant Louis Paul Font, MI, United States Army, who has applied for conscientious objector status and subsequent discharge from military service.
2. My connections with Lieutenant Font were quite close while our tours at West Point overlapped for a year and a half, he as a cadet, and myself as an assistant professor in social sciences. Although I never taught him in a formal class, we worked together in extracurricular activities and seminars. He was committee chairman for a large student conference; I was a faculty advisor working directly with him. He was an applicant for a Rhodes Scholarship; I was the secretary of the selection committee. We discussed often the problems of service and ethics in my office and quarters at West Point, both before and after his graduation; in his apartment at Harvard; by ourselves; and with his friends. I have met his parents and family. I feel I am very well qualified to judge his character.
3. Lieutenant Font aims at and attains the highest standards of integrity. His character and honor are beyond reproach, and it is his complete intellectual honesty and "genuineness" which are among his qualities of character that I admire most. He has an exceptionally inquiring mind, and he is not satisfied with answers unless he agrees with the premises on which they are based. In our many long discussions, one of the fundamental bases upon which

our friendship developed was the commonality of our ideals of service and ethical behavior. He is, as his testimony amply details, a man very much concerned with the morality of his, and others', actions. His involvement with the ethics of his then-chosen profession was not a preoccupation developed overnight. It was an integral part of his character that I observed at least as far back as the spring of 1967.

4. With respect to Lieutenant Font's courage, I can only extrapolate from my understanding of him in reasonably settled circumstances. I have never observed him in great physical danger where physical courage would be essential—but I have no doubt he possesses more than enough to face combat. As to his moral courage, it is one of his strongest attributes.

5. I personally regret that he has reached the conclusions he has about the war in Vietnam and, rather obviously, I do not agree with them. Be that as it may, I am certain his convictions are sincere and that there is no intent here to represent falsely a belief not actually held.

6. I recommend that his request for recognition as a conscientious objector and for discharge from the Armed Forces be approved.

C. P. HUTTON

Major, GS (Armor)

Assistant Chief of Staff

(This letter is a carbon copy. As of 20 April 1970 the original had not arrived at HQ, First U.S. Army.

The return address is Major C.P. Hutton, HHC, 25th Infantry Division, Vietnam, APO SF 96225.)